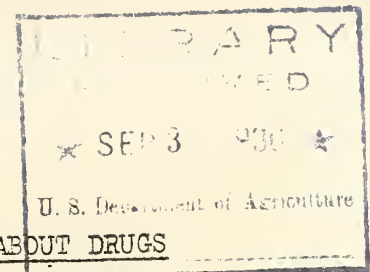


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## SOME THINGS YOU OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT DRUGS

A radio talk by Dr. J. J. Durrett, Food and Drug Administration, delivered through Station WRC and 37 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, August 7, 1930.

Drug Control is a division of the Food and Drug Administration in the Department of Agriculture. We enforce the drug sections of the food and drugs law.

This law, which has been called by the courts the most beneficent legislative enactment of recent times, was enacted in 1906 to prevent unscrupulous manufacturers from misrepresenting on their labels foods and drugs and to prevent adulteration. The law forbids misleading statements as to the composition of medicines, and fraudulent statements as to what medicines will do when used according to label directions.

Let us now see how the law works by considering a product labeled as an antiseptic mouth wash and gargle. One of our inspectors buys on the open market a sample of this preparation. One of our chemists analyzes it to determine what it contains. One of our bacteriologists tests it to determine if it will kill bacteria in a test tube. After we have determined these facts, one of our physicians reviews the claims made on the label to see if they are true. If they are not true, we decide on an appropriate course of action under the law.

During the last four years samples of over 1000 preparations described as antiseptics have been collected, tested, and the label claims reviewed. As a result of this activity on our part the labels of widely distributed antiseptics are at this time comparatively accurate in their claims.

Unfortunately for the consumer, this cannot be said about the extensive antiseptic mouth wash and gargle advertisements appearing in papers and magazines which are not subject to regulation by the food and drugs law. However, improvement in this field may be expected now that the Federal Trade Commission is proceeding against this type of abuse of public confidence. The National Better Business Bureau, cooperating with many newspapers and magazines, is also discouraging fraudulent advertising. Much remains to be done along this line.

Many preparations of this class are modestly labeled as deodorant, cleansing, antiseptic mouth washes and gargles. The only reason why they are labeled antiseptic at all is because they possess the ability to kill bacteria in a test tube under favorable conditions. Irrespective of the ability of these mouth washes and gargles to reach the germs of disease located deep in the inaccessible recesses of the mouth, tonsils, adenoids and other parts of the upper respiratory tract, you are eloquently and even at times spectacularly persuaded, urged or frightened by advertising into gargling, after which it is implied that you may feel safe and secure from the germs of from thirty to fifty diseases which the manufacturer tells you start by first attacking the mouth, nose or throat. What do the best informed workers in this country in this field think of such claims?

After exhaustive experiments on rabbits, using eight or ten different varieties of the best and most accredited antiseptics, one group of outstanding workers concluded that antiseptic mouth washes and gargles when dropped into the noses of rabbits, are devoid of beneficial influences in removing disease-producing germs; that in some instances an actual increase in disease-producing germs occurs; that there is no possibility of freeing the upper respiratory passage of disease-producing germs by treatment with antiseptic solutions; and that great harm can be done by putting irritating solutions into the nasal passage.

Meaningless jargon, purporting to be scientific facts, is used in many advertisements to impress those who are seeking an antiseptic mouth wash and gargle to kill the germs which they have been led to believe are about to attack them. A recent statement said that the preparation referred to had such strong effect that it would destroy a billion four hundred million germs in fifteen seconds, and went on to explain that the law in the United States required such a preparation to kill only two hundred million germs in three hundred seconds. Such a statement is incorrect and means absolutely nothing. These big figures are used solely for the purpose of impressing the unsuspecting public with the great power of the preparation, when, as a matter of fact, any antiseptic mouth wash and gargle meeting only the minimum requirements, easily accomplishes such results. These statements are loosely based on test-tube experiments and they only have to use a bigger tube, more antiseptic and more germs, and the figures can be raised to any desired size.

Remember that as antiseptic mouth washes and gargles are used they are weakened by dilution with saliva; that they are only in the mouth and throat as a rule once or twice during a day and then only for a few seconds out of the twenty-four hours; and that they cannot possibly reach many of the folds and inaccessible recesses in which the actual sites of many beginning infections are located.

Mouth washes and gargles are legitimate and useful agents when recommended and used for what they are capable of doing. If they are antiseptic, there is no possible objection to designating them as such. Many of them are cleansing, soothing, refreshing and tend to mask odors arising in the mouth. Because of the very nature of the limitations attending their use, as outlined above, they cannot be depended upon to prevent or cure infectious diseases of the upper respiratory tract such as for example, sore throat.

You see that the food and drugs law forbids the manufacturer telling you by statements on the label that his mouth wash and gargle is antiseptic when it is not. Likewise it forbids the manufacturer from telling you that his antiseptic mouth wash and gargle will prevent or cure sore throat, or any other infection of the respiratory tract, when he knows that this is untrue. It does not prevent such claims being made in advertisements, and this is why it is safer to judge what a mouth wash and gargle is, and what it is capable of doing, by the statements made on the label rather than by those made elsewhere.